DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 253 271 JC 850 038

AUTHOR Fernandez, Thomas V.; Raab, Marjorie K.
TITLE Academic Planning through Program Review: Can It Work?
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Planning; Community Colleges; *Curriculum Development; Evaluation Methods; *Program Evaluation; *Teacher Role; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Nassau Community College NY

ABSTRACT

Nassau Community College (NCC) is currently working with a program evaluation model in which faculty from one department serve as peer evaluation consultants to direct the self-evaluations of other departments. The four functional objectives initially motivating the development of NCC's plan directed that: real decisions about academic programs should result from program review and involve the joint participation of faculty and administrators; objective information reviewed and analyzed as part of the program review should be the basis for program decisions; community needs should be examined as part of the program review; and a practicial timetable should provide for the timely review of academic programs from which decisions of current value are produced. The peer consultants, who are generally selected from faculty who have previously participated in the curricular evaluations within their own departments, administer evaluation activities undertaken in four phases: (1) needs assessment, which involves a survey of constituent groups regarding program goals and a conference to promote consensus among diverse groups about specific program objectives; (2) outcomes assessment, which includes an examination of the extent to which proposed goals are being achieved; (3) review of program objectives, which uses the results of the previous phases to make early decisions about desired modifications; and (4) impact assessment, which provides for a follow-up by program faculty of the effect of the program modifications in producing intended improvements. (LAL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED253271

ACADEMIC PLANNING THROUGH PROGRAM REVIEW

CAN IT WORK?

Thomas V. Fernandez
Professor of Physics

Marjorie K. Raab
Director of Academic Program Study

Nassau Community College
Garden City, New York

JC 850 038

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Marjorie Raab

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"But we already did this for our program's licensure reaccreditation!"
"Outcomes Assessment? What kind of jargon is this?"
"What is the administration really going to do with this information?"

Even more compelling than these reactions from program faculty are the questions asked by those charged with administering the review of academic programs at our campuses: How do we make program review work? What do we do to encourage academic departments to accept the challenge to examine their curricular programs critically? Such questions serve to exemplify the reality that although universally accepted as a necessary process, program review is often viewed as unproductive of tangible benefits.

Perceptions concerning the benefits of various forms of program review do, of course, depend on one's perspective within the institution. Administrators, for example, often view program self-evaluation as being hopelessly self-serving to faculty ends while simply preserving the status quo. Program faculty, on the other hand, tend to view the use of external evaluators as being slanted to the budgetary concerns of campus administrators and largely insensitive to educational concerns.

One campus, looking for a viable middle ground, is currently working with a model in which faculty from one department are employed to direct the self-evaluations of others. Under this approach, faculty are external with regard to objectivity toward the department and programs which they assist to review, but are internal with respect to knowledge and understanding of the campus.

The development of such a model for application to other campuses is being undertaken by Nassau Community College under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. There were four functional objectives initially motivating the development of the Nassau plan:

- *Real decisions* about academic programs should result from program review and involve the joint participation of faculty and administrators.

- *Objective information* reviewed and analyzed as part of the program review should be the basis for program decisions.

- *Community needs* should be examined as part of the program review to provide a broader view of the expectations of constituent groups.

- *A practical timetable* should provide for the timely review of academic programs from which decisions of current value to the College are produced.

The approach being developed in the Nassau project involves the training and deployment of a number of key faculty to serve as peer evaluation consultants for other departments in the self-evaluation of their academic programs. The Peer Consultants (as they are called) are generally selected from faculty who have previously participated in the curricular evaluations within their own departments. In this way the number of such faculty who are used to phase-in other departmental evaluations grows geometrically within the total campus evaluation cycle.

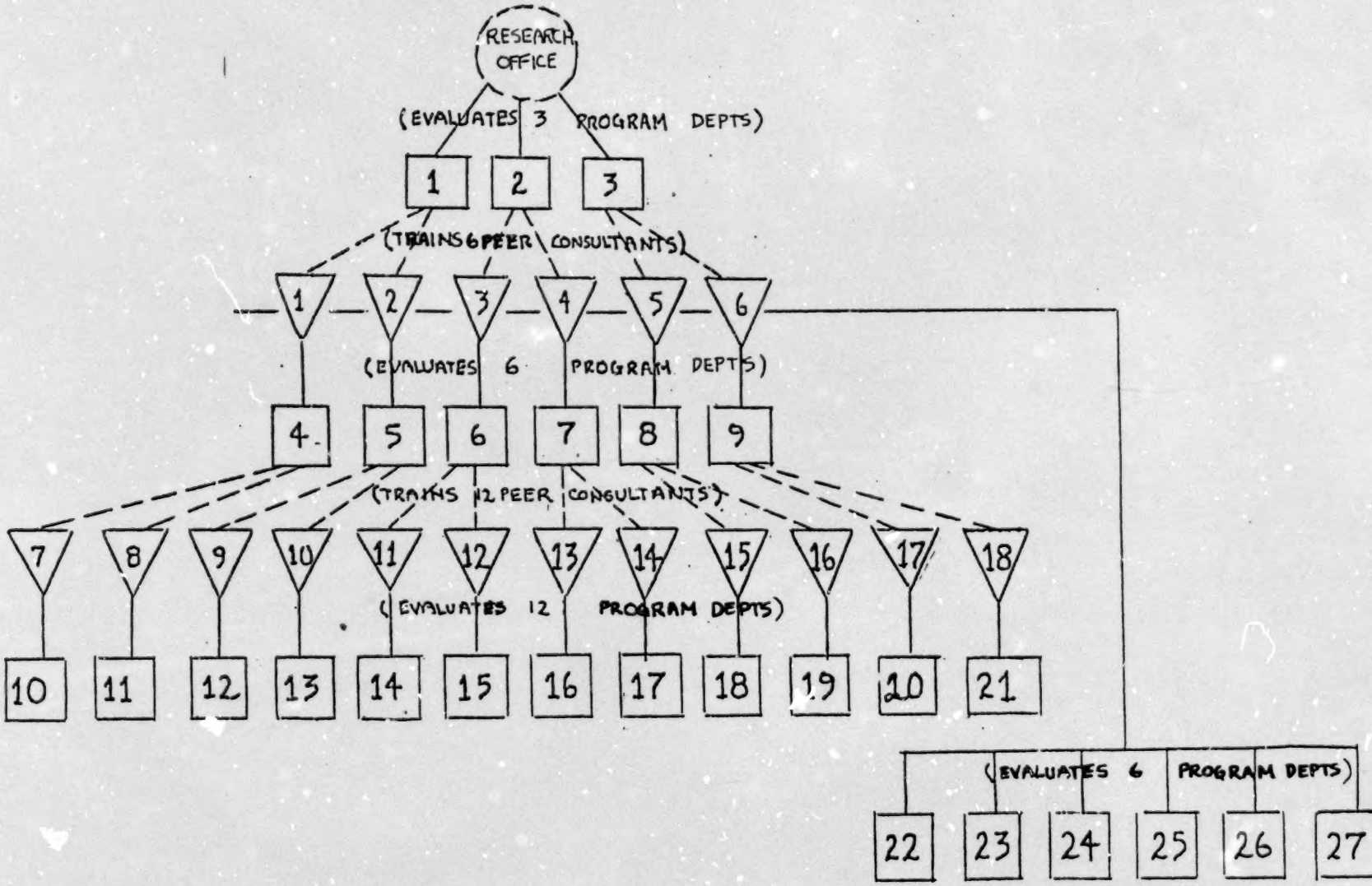
One such progression is depicted in the accompanying figure in which six Peer Consultants are selected from three departments concluding the first phase of evaluations of Nassau's academic programs.

- - Insert Figure 1 here - -

FIGURE I

SEQUENCE OF DEPARTMENTAL SELF-EVALUATION

USING TRAINED PEER CONSULTANTS



The six Peer Consultants participate in a training regime, after which they administer the evaluations of six other program departments from which 12 new Peer Consultants emerge. Thus, by the third phase evaluations, 18 additional program departments are involved, for a total of 27 departmental evaluations in all.

The evaluation activities administered by the Peer Consultant with the faculty of a given academic program are undertaken in four stages, the overall sequence of which is identified in the accompanying figure.

- - Insert Figure 2 here - -

The initial activity -

NEEDS ASSESSMENT
(1st Semester)

utilizes a preliminary survey to identify the broad expectations of constituent groups regarding program goals. This is followed by a Conference on Program goals which utilizes a modification of the Delphi Technique to promote consensus among diverse groups about specific program objectives. Typically, expectations regarding such areas of program functioning as baccalaureate transfer, career employment, in-service courses, community service and special skills are examined in this phase of the program evaluation.

A second stage -

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT
(2nd Semester)

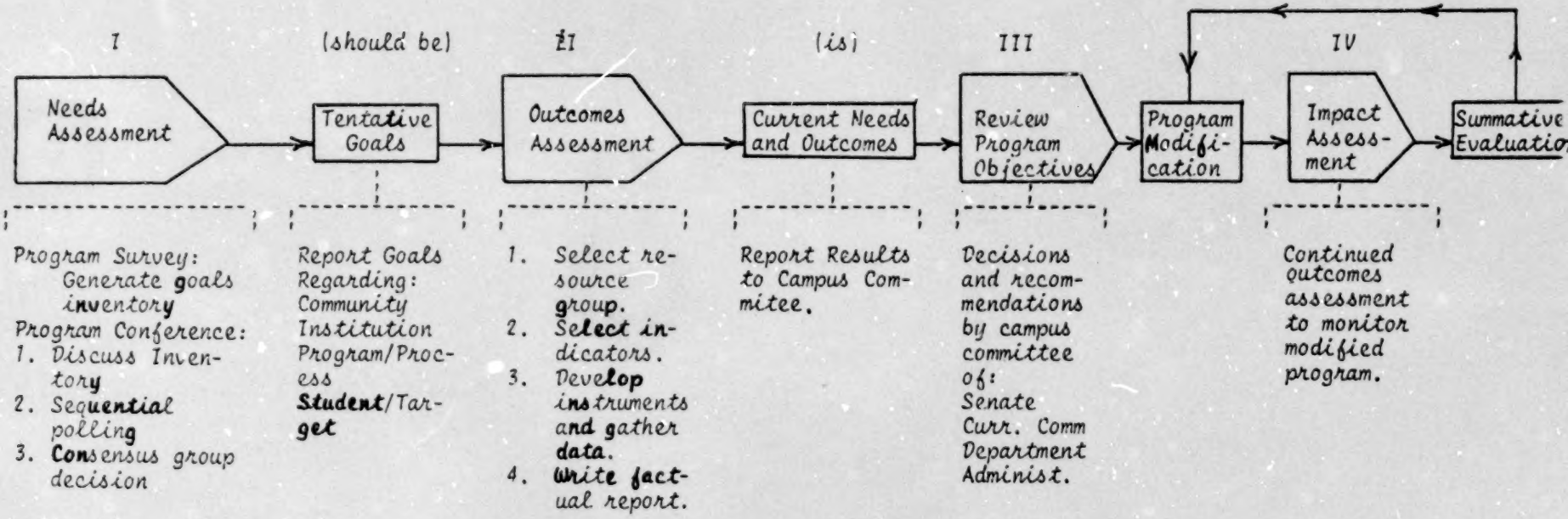
involves an examination of the extent to which the proposed goals are being achieved, as revealed through specific measurements of program performance. Such measures as program attrition, academic achievement of program students,

FIGURE II

NASSAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

MODEL FOR PROGRAM REVIEW



and transfer and employment of program graduates are among the data frequently reviewed by faculty in this phase. Both the timetable and quality of the examination of program outcomes by faculty is greatly advanced by the production of a Profile on Program Performance by Nassau's Office of Institutional Research. The Profile serves to develop a description of all programs at the College according to a uniform set of ten performance measures. This provides a common core of institutional information which can be examined uniformly by program faculty in the outcomes assessment phase; additionally, other areas of special concern to the department are also examined by program faculty.

The third activity -

REVIEW OF PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

(3rd Semester)

is the stage in which the program goals identified in the Needs Assessment and the examination of program performance in the Outcomes Assessment are utilized as the basis for early decisions regarding desired modifications. This charge is given to a special campus committee which includes representation from the campus Academic Senate, the campus Curriculum Committee, departmental faculty, and the college administration and trustees.

This is a crucial phase of the process-the payoff. In the final analysis, the success with which systematic program improvements are brought about depends strongly on the commitment which program faculty have to the process by which such decisions are made. It is important, therefore, that the decisions which emerge here are made jointly between program faculty and other respected members of the college community. The negotiations may be substantial and complex, but must ultimately be translated into desired performance objectives and the modification of program practices necessary to achieve them.

The remaining activity -

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

which completes the evaluation cycle, provides for a follow-up look by program faculty of the effect of the program modifications in producing intended improvements. In effect, this last activity involves the continuation by program faculty of selected measures from their outcomes assessment. In this manner, new performance levels of the program can be measured which, at this point, would have already been modified in a deliberate way.

What is the role of the Peer Consultant in all of this? It may vary with regard to specific demands as determined by the needs of the program faculty involved in the evaluation. Generally, though, the Peer Consultant serves to facilitate the progress of the evaluation being conducted by program faculty, and does not serve as an external evaluator. Typically, for example, the Peer Consultant would 1) initiate the planning and design of the Needs and Outcomes Assessments to be implemented by program faculty, 2) assist faculty in identifying where and how to collect and examine program data, and 3) keep the progress of the evaluation according to the prescribed timetable. The Peer Consultant also participates with the department in the third semester deliberations in which decisions concerning desired program modifications are determined.

Beyond the immediate benefits to the programs of the Nassau Campus and the 23,000 students enrolled there, the project is expected to produce published procedures involved in the evaluation process itself in a highly useable and adaptable format for dissemination to a wider audience. The anticipated dissemination products include a published "How to do it" Manual on Practical Self-Evaluation as well as a coordinated series of video tape cassettes for the Training of Faculty Peer Consultants.

Thomas V. Fernandez is Professor of Physics, and Marjorie K. Raab is Director of Academic Program Study, Nassau Community College, Garden City, NY 11530

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
8118 Math-Sciences Building
University of California
Los Angeles, California 90024

MAR 29 1985